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THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS IN THE TALMUD.

THE FIVE DISCIPLES OF JESUS.

IN the Talmud Sanhedrin 43a we read: "Our Rabbis have taught, Jesus had five disciples — Matthai, Nakkai, Netzer, Buni and Thodah. They brought Matthai (before the judges). He said, 'Must Matthai be killed? For it is written (Ps. xlii. 2): *Matthai* (= when) shall (I) come and appear before God.' They said to him, 'Yes, Matthai must be killed, for it is written (Ps. xli. 5): *Matthai* (= when) shall (he) die and his name perish.' They brought Nakkai. He said to them, 'Must Nakkai be killed? For it is written (Exod. xxiii. 7): The *Naki* (= innocent) and the righteous thou shalt not slay.' They said to him, 'Yes, Nakkai must be killed, for it is written (Ps. x. 8): In secret places doth he slay *Naki* (= the innocent).' They brought Netzer. He said, 'Must Netzer be killed? For it is written (Isa. xi. 1): *Netzer* (= a branch) shall spring up from his roots.' They said to him, 'Yes, Netzer must be killed. For it is written (Isa. xiv. 19): Thou art cast forth out of thy grave like an abominable *Netzer* (= branch).' They brought Buni. He said to them, 'Must Buni be killed? For it is written (Ex. iv. 22): *B'ni* (= my son), my first born Israel.' They said to him, 'Yes, Buni must be killed. For it is written (Ex. iv. 23): Behold, I slay *Bincha* (= thy son) thy first born.' They brought Thodah. He said to them, 'Must Thodah be killed? For it is written (Ps. c. 1): A Psalm for *Thodah* (= thanksgiving).' They

said to him, Yes, Thodah must be killed, for it is written (Ps. l. 23): Whoso sacrificeth *Thodah* (= thanksgiving) honoreth me.' ”

No Christian tradition exists which specifies any five out of the Twelve as having met with such a fate. But the fact that the five were called disciples of Jesus implies that they were Christians, not that they were contemporaries of Jesus. It is possible that the story refers to the persecution of Christians under Bar Cocheba, and presents a fantastic account of some incident of that persecution. The fact that the martyrdom of these disciples is described on the same page of the Talmud on which the execution of Jesus at Lud (Lydda) is narrated, shows that it was a Jewish and not a heathenish court which sentenced the disciples. On the other hand this Talmudic passage is one of the many curious examples of the way in which the Scriptures are applied by the rabbis. It is one of the strangest specimens of transparent fiction, and of silly trifling with the words of Scripture.

JACOB OF KEPHAR SAMA (SECHANJA).

Besides the five names given above the Talmud also knows of another disciple of Jesus, Jacob of Kepharsama, who was known for his thaumaturgic power, which no doubt led him to be placed in immediate relation with Jesus, the master of sorcery, and which in his time caused a sensation that was never afterwards to be forgotten. In the Talmud this Jacob comes before us as a performer of miracles and a teacher. For convenience' sake we divide the matter, and treat

1. *Jacob, the Performer of Miracles.*

a. In the Tosephta Hullin II, 22, 23 we read: “The Case of Rabbi El'azar ben Damah, Whom a Serpent Bit.—There came in Jacob, a man of Kepharsama, to cure him

in the name of Jeshua ben Pandira, but Rabbi Ishmael did not allow it. He said, 'Thou art not permitted, Ben Damah.' He said, 'I will bring thee a proof that he may heal me.' But he had not finished bringing a proof when he died. Rabbi Ishmael said, 'Happy art thou, Ben Damah, for thou hast departed in peace, and hast not broken through the ordinances of the wise; for upon every one who breaks through the fence of the wise, punishment comes at last, as it is written (Eccles. x. 8): Whoso breaketh a fence a serpent shall bite him.' "

b. In Jerusalem Shabbath 14*d* we read the same almost word for word with the addition at the end: "The serpent only bit him in order that a serpent might not bite him in the future. And what could he (Ben Damah) have said? (Lev. xviii. 5): 'Which, if a man do, he shall live in them' (i. e., not die in them)."

c. In Jerusalem Aboda Zara 40*d*, 41*a*, we find the same as in *a* above, except that after the words "came in to cure him," is added, "He said, 'we will speak to thee in the name of Jeshu ben Pandira.' "

d. In the Babylonian Talmud Aboda Zara 27*b* we read thus: "It happened that Ben Dama, son of Rabbi Ishmael's sister, was bitten by a serpent. There came Jacob of Kephars S'khanja to heal him, but Rabbi Ishmael would not allow him. Ben Dama said, 'Rabbi Ishmael, my brother, allow me to be healed by him, and I will bring thee a verse from the Torah that this is permitted.' But he had not finished his discourse when his soul departed, and he died. Then Rabbi Ishmael exclaimed over him: 'Happy art thou, Ben Dama, for thy body is pure and thy soul hath passed away in purity and thou hast not transgressed the words of thy companions, who have said (Eccles. x. 8): Whoso breaketh through a fence, a serpent shall bite him.' "

As to the details of the story, there is little variation among the several versions given above. In all, the Chris-

tian proposes to heal the sick man in the name of Jesus ben Pandira, but Ishmael would rather have his nephew die than have him cured through the name of Jesus.

Leaving out of sight the fanaticism of this rabbi, we can only say that our narrative confirms the New Testament which records the miracles of Jesus and his disciples.

2. *Jacob the Teacher.*

1. In Tosephta Hullin II, 24, we read: "The case of Rabbi Eliezer, who was arrested for *Minuth*,¹ and they brought him to the tribunal for judgment. The governor said to him, 'Doth an old man like thee occupy himself with such things?' He said to him, 'Faithful is the judge concerning me.' The governor supposed that he only said this of him, but he was not thinking of any but his Father who is in heaven. The governor said to him, 'Since I am trusted concerning thyself, I will also be in this. I said, Perhaps these societies err concerning these things. *Dismissus*, Behold thou art released.' And when he had been released from the tribunal, he was troubled because he had been arrested for *Minuth*. His disciples came in to console him, but he would not be comforted. Rabbi Akiba came in and said to him, 'Rabbi, shall I say to thee why thou art perhaps grieving?' He said to him, 'Say on.' He said to him, 'Perhaps one of the *Minim* (i. e., Jewish Christians) has said to thee a word of *Minuth* and it has pleased thee.' He said, 'By Heaven, thou hast reminded me! Once I was walking along the street of Sepphoris, and I met Jacob of Kepharsichnin, and he said to me a word of *Minuth* in the name of Jeshu ben Pantiri, and it pleased me. And I was arrested for words of *Minuth* because I transgressed the words of Torah (Prov. v. 8): Keep thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house (vii. 26), for she hath cast down many wounded.' "

¹ I. e., a leaning towards Christianity.

2. In the Talmud Aboda Zara 16*b*, 17*a*, we read the following: "Rabbi Eliezer was seized on the charge of being a Christian. The judge said to him, 'Thou, an aged man, to busy thyself with such idle matters!' He replied, 'I admit the faithful reproof of the judge.' The latter, thinking that he referred to him, whereas he really meant God, said: 'Since you trust me you are discharged.' He went home deeply distressed, and would receive no consolation from his disciples. 'Rabbi!' cried Aquiba, 'Allow me to say something which I have learned from thee.' 'Say it,' was the reply. Hast thou not had a dispute with a Christian, and by approving what he said, got thyself into trouble?' 'Aquiba!' said he, 'thou just remindest me of a certain incident. Once upon a time I was walking in the upper street of Sepphoris, when I met one [of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth], whose name was Jacob, a man of Kefr Sekanja, who said to me: "It is written in your law: Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore into the house of the Lord thy God (Deut. xxiii. 18). May a sink be made with it for the high priest?" This question I could not answer. Whereupon he said to me: 'Jesus of Nazareth taught me thus on the subject. It is written, He gathered it of the hire of an harlot (Micah i. 7); that is, it came from an impure source, and it may be applied to an impure use." When I heard this explanation I was pleased with it, and on this account I was accused of heresy, because I trespassed against the word: Remove thy way far from her (Prov. v. 8; "from her," i. e., from heresy).'"

3. The same story is also found in the Midrash on Eccles. i. 8, where the reading is: "Thus has Jesus son of Pandera taught," whereas the Talmud reads: "Jesus the Nazarene."

The Eliezer here mentioned is Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanos,² brother-in-law of Gamaliel II, the grandson of Ga-

² See the interesting treatise of Toettermann, *Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanos*

maliei I, the teacher of Paul. That Eliezer was a famous teacher can be learned from the fact that he is mentioned 324 times in the Mishna. Now this famous teacher acknowledges that he was pleased with an explanation given by Jesus of Nazareth. This teaching Eliezer received from a certain Jacob, one of the disciples of Jesus, and whom the Jewish historian Graetz identifies with the apostle James.³

The genuineness of this incident is defended by the late Jewish scholar Derenbourg in *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine*, pp. 357-360, although Edersheim in *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* I, 537, declares it to be plainly apocryphal. But there is no ground to reject the evidence of a man so well known as Rabbi Eliezer, especially as it tells against himself. The story seems to be well authenticated.

ANOTHER CHRISTIAN WHO PERFORMS MIRACLES.

In Jerusalem Shabbath 14*d* we read: "The grandson [of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi] had something stuck in his throat. There came a man and whispered to him in the name of Jeshu Pandera, and he recovered. When he (the Christian) went out, Joshua said to him, 'What didst thou whisper to him?' He said to him, 'A certain word.' He said, 'It had been better for him that he had died rather than this had happened.' And it thus befell him, 'as it were an error that proceedeth from the ruler' (Eccles. x. 5)."

The meaning of the quotation from Eccles. x. 5 seems to be that the fact of the child having been cured by a Christian was a deplorable evil which could not be undone, as the command of a ruler given in error, and implicitly obeyed, may result in mischief which cannot be afterwards

sive de vi qua doctrina Christiana primis seculis illustrissimos quosdam Judaeorum attraxit, Leipsic, 1877.

³ *Gnosticismus und Judenthum*, p. 25, note 22.

put right. The saying is characteristic of the feeling of Jews towards Christians in the third century in Palestine.

A CHRISTIAN JUDGE APPLIED TO.

In the treatise *Shabbath* 116*a, b*, we read: "Imma Shalom was the wife of Rabbi Eliezer, and sister of Rabban Gamaliel. There was in her neighborhood a philosopher of whom report said that he would not take a bribe. They wished to have a laugh at him. So she brought him a golden lamp, and they went before him. She said: 'I wish them to apportion unto me of the property of the family.' He said to them, 'Divide it.' He (Gamaliel) said: 'We have it written: Where there is a son, a daughter does not inherit.' He (the judge) answered, 'From the day that ye were exiled from your land, the law of Moses has been taken away, and the law of the Evangelion has been given, and in it is written, "A son and a daughter shall inherit alike."' Next day, he (Gamaliel) brought him a Libyan ass. He (the judge) said to them, 'I have looked further to the end of the book, and in it is written: "I, the Gospel, am not come to take away from the law of Moses but to add to the law of Moses," and in it (the law of Moses) is written, "Where there is a son, a daughter does not inherit."' She said to him, 'Let your light shine as a lamp!' Rabban Gamaliel said to her, 'The ass has come and trodden out the lamp.'"

Whether the story is intended to represent more than to show the venality of this judge, is difficult to say. It is also questionable whether the philosopher possessed a text of the Gospel at all. It is more likely that he quoted what seems to be a "saying of Jesus" from a defective memory, and in this perverted form the sentence passed into the Talmud.

With this last story we have exhausted all the Talmud passages collected by Dalman. But we cannot stop here,

because we believe that still more can be derived from an examination of the Talmud. We mean especially the numerous sentences which in the Talmud are placed specifically in the mouth of Jewish authorities, but which might with greater correctness be ascribed to Jesus. Of this we shall speak further on. For the present we continue our notices on the followers of Jesus.

CHRISTIANS STUDY THE SCRIPTURES.

In the Talmud *Aboda Zarah 4a* we read the following: "Rabbi Abahu recommended Rabbi Saphra to the Christians as a good scholar. Thereupon the Christians remitted his taxes for thirteen years. But it happened that one day Rabbi Saphra was asked to give an explanation of Amos iii. 3, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities,' adding, 'How can you suppose God to vent his wrath on one whom he addresses as his friend?' Rabbi Saphra was unable to reply. The Christians then took him, tied a rope round his head, and tormented him. When Rabbi Abahu came and found him in this plight, he demanded of the Christians: 'Why do you torment this rabbi so cruelly?' They replied, 'Did you not tell us that he was a very learned man? To the first question we asked of him he was unable to make any answer.' 'I did, indeed,' answered Rabbi Abahu, 'say that he was a good scholar in the Talmud, but not in the Scriptures.' 'But how is it that you understand the Scriptures and he does not?' To this Rabbi Abahu answered: 'We, who come in contact with you Christians are obliged, for our self-preservation, to study the Scriptures; because you dispute so often with us from the Scriptures, and because we know that you study them; but the other Jews, who live among Gentiles, have no need of that, as they do not dispute with them concerning the Scriptures.' "

What a gloomy picture! The Jews read the Scriptures, not because they were concerned about the "one thing needful," but only for the sake of controversy!

Another illustration of the acquaintance of the Christians with the Scriptures is contained in Talmud Yoma 40b: "The disciples asked Rabbi Akiba, whether, in case that the lot appointed the goat which stood on the left of the priest for a sacrifice in the Temple, the position of the goats should be changed? He replied, 'Give the Christians (*minim*) no occasion for assailing us'; or as Rashi, the commentator, explains it: 'To the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth who discourse concerning the Scriptures, that they do not say you (Jews) act arbitrarily.'"⁴

ENACTMENTS AGAINST THE WRITINGS OF THE CHRISTIANS.

That the Gospels and other writings of the *Minim* (i. e., Christians) were in circulation at an early time, we see from the many enactments of the Jewish rabbis against them. At the time that the rules for keeping the Sabbath were under consideration, it was asked in the schools whether, if the Gospels and other books of the Christians should happen to fall into the fire, it would be permissible to rescue them from the fire, inasmuch as the name of God was written in them, and they contained numerous quotations from the Old Testament. On this matter we read Tosephta Shabbath, XIII, 5: "The Gospels and the other books of the Christians they do not save, but these are burnt in their place, they and their sacred names. Rabbi José the Galilean says, 'On a week-day one cuts out the sacred names and hides them and burns the rest.' Rabbi Tarphon said, 'May I lose my son! if they come into my hand I would burn them and the sacred names too. If the pursuer were pursuing after me, I would enter into a house

⁴ So in the Venice edition, quoted by Goldfahn, in Graetz's *Monatsschrift*, 1873, p. 109.

of idolatry, but would enter not their houses. For the idolaters do not acknowledge Him (i. e., God) and speak falsely concerning Him. And concerning them the Scripture says (Is. lvii. 8): And behind the doors and the doorpost thou hast set thy memorial.' Rabbi Ishmael said, 'Whereas in order to make peace between a man and his wife, God says (cf. Num. v. 23): Let my name which is written in holiness be blotted out in water, how much more should the books of the Minim, which put enmity and jealousy and strife between Israel and their Father who is in Heaven, be blotted out, and their sacred names too. And concerning them the Scripture says (Ps. cxxxix. 21), Do I not hate them, O Lord, which hate thee, and I loathe them that rise up against thee. I hate them with a perfect hatred, and they have become to me as enemies. And even as men do not save them (the books) from burning, so do they not save them from falling (from a building), nor from water, nor from anything which destroys them.' "

Almost the same thing we read in Jerusalem Shabbath 15c and Babylonian Shabbath 116a. There we see that not even the strict observance of the Sabbath was to stand in the way of the instant destruction of the books of the Minim; nay, the terrible profanity of destroying the names of God which were thought to give the material on which they were inscribed a special and inviolable sanctity, was set aside, and this not only on the Sabbath, when the cutting out of them might be held to entail "work," but according to Rabbi Tarphon, even on week days.

That, according to Rabbi Akiba, those have no portion in the world to come who read in books outside the canon (i. e., books of the Minim) we have already noticed above. Nevertheless the Gospels circulated, at least the Gospel of Matthew. For whatever may be the date assigned to it by modern critics, certain it is that in some form it circulated at a very early date. In the Talmud Sanhedrin 90b

we read that Gamaliel II (who died about the year 110 A. D.) was asked: "How do you know that the dead will rise again?" He adduced passages in proof of the resurrection from the law (Deut. xxxi. 16), the Prophets (Is. xxvi: 19) and the Hagiographa (Song of Songs ix). These passages were rejected as insufficient. He finally quoted the words "the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them" (Deut. xi. 21). Since the fathers were dead, the passage must have promised a resurrection, when alone the land could be given to these fathers. This shows the force of the interpretation given by Jesus in Matt. xxii. 32 ("I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob! God is not the God of the dead, but of the living"), and the inference he deduced therefrom.

ENACTMENTS AGAINST THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

On several occasions we have referred already to the intercourse between the rabbis and Jewish Christians,⁵ which shows that Minuth (i. e., Christianity) had an attractive power. In order to break its influence and to check its growth, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem the first formal anathema was hurled by the entire Rabbinic assembly, which had met at Jamnia or Jabneh,

⁵As another illustration we quote the following from *Midrash Koheleth* on Ecclesiastes, i. 8: "Rabbi Hanina, nephew of Rabbi Joshua, went to Capernaum, and the Christians bewitched him and made him ride into the town on an ass upon the Sabbath. When he returned to his uncle, Rabbi Joshua gave him an unguent which healed him from the bewitchment. But Joshua said to him: 'Since you have heard the braying of the ass of that wicked one, you can no longer remain on the soil of Israel.' Hanina went down to Babylon and there died in peace.—Farrar, who quotes this story in *Expositor*, Vol. VI, 1877, p. 423, says: "The expression 'the ass of the wicked one' is only too plainly and sadly an illusion to the ass ridden by our Lord in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem; and the suppression of the name Jesus is in accordance with the practice of only mentioning Him in an oblique and cryptographic manner.—Lowe (*Fragment of the Talmud Babli*, Cambridge, 1879, p. 71) translated for "ass" *wine*—in the Talmud both words are expressed the same—and thinks that the Christians intoxicated him with the wine of the *agapai*, which they seem to have celebrated on Friday night. More probable, perhaps, is the meaning of Delitzsch (*Ein Tag in Capernaum*, Leipsic, 1873, p. 25) who says that the "ass of that wicked" refers to the foolish preaching of the crucified

under the auspices of Gamaliel II. Thus the great Rabbi Moses Maimonides⁶ (died 1204 A. D.) says: "In the days of Rabbi Gamaliel the *minim* increased in Israel, and afflicted Israel, and seduced men to turn away from God. Then when he saw that it was indispensably necessary, he instituted that imprecation in which God is besought that the *minim* should be destroyed, and added it to the eighteen prayers, so that the whole number now found in the Prayer Book is nineteen." Thus far Maimonides in Hilcoth Tephilla, chap. II.

From the Talmud we learn the history of the prayer which is as follows: "Simon Pakuli arranged the eighteen benedictions before Rabbi Gamaliel in the present order at Jabneh. Said Rabban Gamaliel to the sages: 'Is there none who knows how to prepare a benediction against the *minim*?' Then arose Samuel the Little and prepared it (Talmud Berachoth 28b)." This prayer, which now forms the twelfth of the so-called Eighteen Benedictions or Shemoneh Esreh⁷ reads now: "O let the slanderers have no hope; all the wicked be annihilated speedily and all the tyrants be cut off quickly; humble thou them quickly in our days. Blessed art thou, O Lord! who destroyest enemies and humblest tyrants."

That this was not the original form is clear from the different recensions of this prayer which exist. Thus Reichardt copied from an old manuscript the following form: "Be thou not a hope to the *meshumadim* (i. e., apostates), but may the *minim*, the double-tongued, the infidels, the traitors, perish together in a moment; may the enemies of thy people Israel be speedily annihilated; mayest thou speedily destroy the kingdom of pride and rend it in pieces; mayest thou humble them speedily in these our days.

⁶ The Jews call him the "second Moses," whereas Moses Mendelssohn is styled the "third Moses."

⁷ See my article "Shemoneh Esreh" in McClintock and Strong's *Cyclop.*

Blessed art thou, O God, for thou shalt break into fragments the wicked, and humble the proud.”⁸ Another form is given by Dalman, “Let there be no hope for the apostates, and the kingdom of pride mayest thou destroy quickly in our days. And let the *Nazarenes* and the Christians suddenly perish. Let them be extinguished from the book of life and not be written with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Jahve, who humblest the wicked.”⁹

Whatever the form of the so-called *Birkath ha-minim*—as the prayer is called—may have been, its existence is attested by Epiphanius, who says that the Jews curse and excommunicate the Nazarenes three times during the day.¹⁰ The same we also learn from Jerome¹¹ and Justin Martyr.¹² In spite of all stringent measures the numbers of believers increased. As many cherished the Christian faith in secret, it was enacted that in case a reader erred in one of the benedictions, he was not to be removed from the reading-desk, but in case he erred in the benediction against the *minim* he was to be removed, because he was then suspected of being a *min* himself.¹³

ENACTMENTS AFFECTING CUSTOMS AND USAGES.

The influence of Christianity being felt more and more, the rabbis changed some of their ancient customs. Thus

⁸ *The Relation of the Jewish Christians to the Jews in the First and Second Centuries*. London, 1884, p. 46.

⁹ *Die Worte Jesu*, p. 299 et seq. See also *Jewish Quarterly Review*, X (1898), 654 et seq.; Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, 1903, p. 155 et seq.; Fiebig, *Der Mischnatractat Berachoth* (1906), p. 28.

¹⁰ *Adversus Haeres.*, XXIX, 9 (ed. Petav., p. 124).

¹¹ *Ad Jesajam* V, 18-19; XLIX, 7; LII, 4 et seq. (ed. Vallarsi IV, 81, 565, 604).

¹² *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, chap. 16.

¹³ Strange to say the Talmud Berachoth 29a records that one year after the composition of this prayer against the *minim*, its very author while before the reading-desk could not remember it and spent from three to four hours in trying to recall it to his mind without avail. He was, however, not removed. Had the author changed his mind with regard to those for whom his prayer was intended? or did he himself belong to the church? or was he already a member of the church when he composed this prayer extempore and composed it only in order to avert suspicion of being a *min* himself?

the "standing men"¹⁴ used to fast on several days of the week, but not on Sunday. And why did they not fast on the day after the Sabbath? Rabbi Jochanan says, "Because of the Nazarenes" (Talmud Taanith 27*b*). The idea is that those who fasted had not to work, and a cessation from work on Sunday might have the appearance of observing the Christian Sunday (i. e., when the Temple was still in existence).

We also read that it was proposed that the Ten Commandments, which were recited every morning in the Temple, should be recited in the synagogues throughout the land; but this was not carried into effect because of the "carping of the *Minim*" (Talmud Berachoth 12*a*), or as the Jerusalem recension (Berachoth 3*a*) explains, "because of the misrepresentation of the *Minim* that they might not say, 'These alone were given to Moses on Sinai.'"

But this was probably not the reason. The real ground seems to me to have been to avoid conforming a part of the Jewish service to the Christian, and thus making the joining of the church much easier. We know not whether the first Christians recited the Ten Commandments. But may not Pliny in his letter to Trajan (*Epist.* 97) have reference to them when he writes that the Christians bound themselves by an oath, not for any guilty purpose, but "not to commit thefts, or robberies, or adulteries, not to break their word, not to repudiate deposits when called upon?" (*Sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent.*)

Another curious example of the necessity which the Jews felt of protesting against the Christians is the following: The inhabitants of Jericho were in the habit of repeating each to himself, in a low voice, the words "Blessed

¹⁴ "Standing men" has reference to those Israelites who were commissioned to act as delegates, representing the nation at the Temple in Jerusalem, and because they had to *stand* near the priest during the offering of the daily sacrifice, they were called "the standing men."

be the name of the glory of His kingdom for ever and ever," after the Shema¹⁵ (i. e., "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God," Deut. vi. 4) had been recited aloud. But, says Rabbi Abahu,¹⁶ "it was enacted that the words should be repeated in a loud voice, on account of the carping of the Minim. But at Nehardea (in Babylon), where there are no Minim, they repeat them to this day in a subdued voice" (Talmud Pesachim 56a).

Great care was taken that the prayers contained not the least sign of a Christian phraseology. Thus we read: "A person who, in his prayer says 'the good shall bless thee,' lo, this is a Christian manner (the way of Minuth); but if one says, 'thy mercies extend even to the birds' nests,' 'let thy name be remembered for good,' 'we praise, we praise,' he shall be silenced (Mishna Megilla IV, 9; Bera-choth V, 3)."

The Mishna is the oldest stratum of the Talmud, and our passage is one of the few in the Mishna which refer directly to *minuth* or Christianity. The meaning is obscure, but it is possible that the reference is here to some ancient Christian liturgical forms. May not the words "thy mercies extend even to the birds' nests" have had reference to Matt. x. 29? Whatever the reason, the reader was silenced.

Even the dress of the person who acted as reader of the synagogue was made a test. Thus we read in Mishna Megilla IV, 8: "If a person should say, I will not go before the Ark in colored garments, he shall not do so in white ones. If he refuses to minister with sandals on his feet, he shall not do so even barefoot." To this Mishnaic injunction the Gemara remarks, that the reason for this is because such a one might belong to the Christians. Rashi,

¹⁵ The watchword of the divine Unity.

¹⁶ As he was a great opponent of the Minim, there must have been some reason for the enactment.

in his commentary on that passage remarks that the Christians used to pay attention to such things.

Because the Christians used to pray towards the east, doubts were expressed as to the feasibility of having the face turned eastward during prayer, and in order to protest most emphatically against the increasing heresy (i. e., Christianity), it was recommended to turn the face westward during prayer, and the Talmud Baba Bathra 25a states of Rav Shesheth, who was totally blind, that he ordered his servant to place him in any other but the eastward direction when he wished to pray, because the Minim turned in that direction. The commentator on this passage, Rashi, refers it to "the disciples of Jesus."

From all this it is evident that the growth of the Christian Church must have been very rapid, otherwise the synagogue would not have required these measures, intended to check the advancement of the Gospel.

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